



Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to speak in strong and unequivocal support of: ***Governor's Bill No. 5044 - AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTICATED HORSES.***

I am Dr. Harry Werner, an equine practitioner of 40 years in North Granby, Connecticut. I am a past president of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners and presently a Director of the World Equine Veterinary Association.

“Inherently dangerous and in possession of a vicious propensity” is an apt description of precisely the opposite of a horse, pony, donkey or mule (i.e., equids). In nature, these are prey animals, not predators. As such, they evolved over millions of years as animals of flight when alarmed. They are programmed to flee, certainly not to attack. Their domestication by and service to men, women and children began over 6000 years ago and continues uninterrupted today.

At the end of my written transcript you will find several reference resources. I invite any whose support of this bill is in question to visit these websites. These are not the domain of a few people infatuated with horses; rather, they represent serious organizations with missions of social welfare in which the bond between horses and humans is central.

The clinical term for this interaction is: ***hippotherapy***, derived from the Greek word ***hippos*** (horse) and defined as a form of physical, occupational and speech therapy in which a therapist uses the characteristic movements of a horse to provide carefully graded motor and sensory input. A foundation is established to improve neurological function and sensory processing, which can be generalized to a wide range of daily activities. Historically the concept of hippotherapy finds its earliest recorded mention in the ancient Greek writings of Hippocrates.

A few examples of such organizations include:

**1. Horses and Humans Research Foundation:**

- A partner with the Institute for Human Animal Connection at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work in “Transforming Trauma: Research Developments and Methods For Trauma-Informed Animal-assisted Interventions” – a cooperative effort highlighting research and applications focusing on Child Maltreatment, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Disaster/Crisis Intervention.

- The funding of “A Pilot Study – The Effect of Hippotherapy on Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders”; published 2013 in The American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

## **2. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International:**

- Mission: “promotes safety and optimal outcomes in equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs.”
- These needs include:
  - Hyperactivity disorders
  - Amputation patients
  - At-risk youth
  - Autism
  - Cerebral palsy
  - Down Syndrome
  - Family counseling
  - Grief counseling
  - Learning disabilities
  - Muscular dystrophy
  - Multiple sclerosis
  - Spina bifida
  - Spinal cord injuries
  - Stroke
  - Substance addiction
  - Traumatic brain injury
  - Visual and auditory impairment
- Over 850 PATH clinical centers around the US and abroad, **including 17 different cities and towns in Connecticut:**
  - West Haven
  - Ellington
  - Naugatuck
  - Columbia
  - Old Lyme
  - Killingworth
  - Stonington
  - Roxbury
  - Middletown
  - New Canaan
  - East Haddam
  - Stafford Springs
  - Uncasville
  - Bristol

- Brooklyn
- Easton
- Ridgefield

3. **The Wounded Warrior Project** has funded \$200,000 in partnership with PATH to award WWP Alumnae scholarships to attend and benefit from PATH clinics throughout the United States.

The aforementioned are only a few examples of horses helping people. There are at least 1,000 more centers that provide hippotherapy services that are not part of PATH International.

Additionally, there are a growing number of prison venues in the United States that are utilizing unwanted horses in a dual mission; rescue for the horses and emotional/psychological rehabilitation for incarcerated persons.

I can say it no better than did the Chief Executive Officer of PATH, Ms. Kay Green, in a letter to our own Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers last September: **“Currently, at our 850 member centers, over 7,500 inherently non-vicious horses change and enrich the lives and health of 56,000 individuals with special needs.”**

I have stressed the vital role that horses play in human health care but also want to emphasize their added importance to many of the citizens of our state. In addition to hippotherapy centers horses, ponies, donkeys and mules are widespread throughout our state and kept as pasture animals, ridden and driven for pleasure and competition and loved and cared for by countless children and their families in organizations such as 4H and Pony Clubs of America.

Finally, I ask that you consider the many Connecticut businessmen and women whose livelihoods depend, in whole or in part, on providing horses for sale and lease, operating boarding facilities and offering rider instruction and horse training. The possible effects of a legal description of an equid as “inherently dangerous and in possession of a vicious propensity” include unwarranted risk exposure to frivolous litigation and encumbrance from escalated insurance costs.

I respectfully urge full support of the Governor’s Bill Number 5044 and I thank you for this opportunity to speak.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Harry W. Werner" followed by a stylized monogram or initials.

Harry W. Werner VMD

February 28, 2014

## **RESOURCES:**

**American Hippotherapy Association:** [www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org](http://www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org)

**Certified Horsemanship Association:** [www.CHA-chse.org](http://www.CHA-chse.org)

**Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association:** [www.eagala.org](http://www.eagala.org)

**Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International (HETI):** [www.frdi.net](http://www.frdi.net)

**The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Intl:** [www.path.org](http://www.path.org)

**Horses & Humans Research Foundation:** [www.horsesandhumans.org](http://www.horsesandhumans.org)

**US Pony Clubs:** [www.ponyclubs.org](http://www.ponyclubs.org)

**Connecticut 4-H Program:** [www.4h.uconn.edu](http://www.4h.uconn.edu)

**New life for horses ... with prisoners - CNN.com**

[www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/09/18/maryland.prison.horses/](http://www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/09/18/maryland.prison.horses/)

**Prison Programs Provide Second Chances For Inmates And Horses**

[www.chronofhorse.com/.../prison-program](http://www.chronofhorse.com/.../prison-program)

**At Colorado prison, wild horses tame inmates - today**

[www.today.com/.../colorado-prison-wild-horses-tame-i...](http://www.today.com/.../colorado-prison-wild-horses-tame-i...)

**Wild Horse Program - Department of Corrections - State of Wyoming**

[www.corrections.wy.gov/wildhorse/index](http://www.corrections.wy.gov/wildhorse/index)

**Rehabilitating Horses and Prisoners - New York Times**

[www.nytimes.com/.../rehabilitating-horses-and-prisoners](http://www.nytimes.com/.../rehabilitating-horses-and-prisoners)

**US Will Pay \$2 Million So Prison Inmates Can Teach Wild Horses** [www.cnsnews.com](http://www.cnsnews.com)